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Reagan sets code of secrecy

Way seems clear for lie detectors' use on officials

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Washington—President Reagan yesterday imposed a new secrecy code on government officials, requiring their prior commitment to "cooperate fully" in the investigation of any leaks of National Security Council information to which they have had access.

This appeared to open the way for the use of lie detector tests on officials who handle national security secrets which are published or broadcast by the media.

The directive, signed by Mr. Reagan, was circulated to 15 departments and agencies. It requires that officials sign a cover note to be attached to all National Security Council classified documents promising to discuss the contents only with persons authorized by law to have access to the particular document.

An administration lawyer said all officials, from the top White House aides on down, would have to sign such statements on receipt of classified NSC information.

At the same time the attorney general was ordered yesterday to convene an interagency group to study the effectiveness of current laws and regulations prohibiting leaks. A separate group is already studying the way material is classified.

Yesterday's directive superseded an order, issued last month, requiring all officials to obtain clearance from their superiors before meeting with reporters and to report back on the discussion afterwards.

David R. Gergen, chief White House spokesman, said this clause was dropped because it had "a chilling effect on the flow of information" and inhibited the "legitimate contacts" that many journalists maintain.

"At the same time, there is a continued belief here, and a very strongly held belief, that it is important to the government and to the public to protect sensitive information," said Mr. Gergen.

The general tightening up reflects Mr. Reagan's growing frustration over news leaks. At his January press conference, Mr. Reagan complained that leaks had reached "a new high," and "endangered things that we were trying to accomplish."

One constantly cited leak judged within the administration to have been damaging was the disclosure of the decision to sell Taiwan additional fighter planes. Diplomatic contacts with the Chinese, who opposed the sale, had not been completed when the news appeared on the front page of the *Washington Post*, according to officials.

The Taiwan leak led to several Pentagon officials taking lie detector tests, but the source of the article remained undiscovered.

Administration officials yesterday said the new code, by covering NSC "deliberations" as well as documents, would outlaw leaks about the existence of personality conflicts within the foreign policy-making operation, such as the well-publicized feud between Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr., and former National Security Adviser Richard V. Allen. Such insight into the functioning of the foreign policy mechanism could be dam-

aging to U.S. interests, said officials.

The notice to be attached to all classified NSC documents in the future reads: "The attached document contains sensitive National Security Council information. It is to be read and discussed only by persons authorized by law."

"Your signature acknowledges you are such a person and you promise you will show or discuss information contained in the document only with persons who are authorized by law to have access to this document."

"Persons handling this document acknowledge he or she knows and understands the security law relating thereto and will cooperate with any lawful investigation by the United States Government into any unauthorized disclosure of classified information contained herein."

In a memorandum informing the agencies of the new ground rules, National Security Adviser William P. Clark ordered that the number of persons with access to NSC information be held to "the absolute minimum," and that dissemination and reproduction of NSC documents be strictly controlled.